

slavery. The doors of the Abrahamic covenant were thrown wide open to all the world, and if all the world had availed themselves of this opportunity to become "my servants," "my people," Hebrews, and therefore the chosen people of God, the continuance of slavery in the world would have become practically impossible. Then, sir, I repeat that the effect of the law was to abolish rather than to extend or perpetuate slavery.

How unlike the slave code of Maryland as it existed twelve months ago, which took away from the master all power to liberate his slave. And yet men of learning have the audacity to compare American with Hebrew slavery, and by instancing the latter they would pronounce the former a divine institution, which of right ought to be perpetuated; when at the same time they must know that in the one case the servant enjoyed personal liberty and in the other he did not, and the effect of one slave code was to abolish slavery and of the other to perpetuate it through all time.

Mr. President, before I leave this part of my subject, I desire to throw out another consideration which I think is worthy of the attention of the Convention. The decalogue is the whole sum and substance of the moral law by which the Jews were to be governed. They had also their ceremonial law, and the law which I have just read is a part of what I think may be termed their judicial law. Now, sir, though it be true that it was the same great Law Giver who enacted for the governance of the Jews both the moral and the judicial law, yet infinite wisdom saw it to be necessary that these two codes should coincide only so far as to be conducive to the great ends in view, and that as they were intended for very distinct purposes, they must of necessity in many things vary. The moral law was perfectly good, and, to use the language of a great commentator, "commanded everything spiritually good in its utmost perfection, and tolerated nothing wrong in the smallest degree;" but, sir, the sentence of this law was to be passed only at the court of high Heaven, where kings and subjects, masters and slaves, rich men and beggars are together to be tried in a body, and where there can be no inequality that we know of, except in the moral character of the parties to be tried. The sentence of the judicial law, on the contrary, while at the same time it commanded nothing morally bad, and forbid nothing morally good, was to be pronounced by a civil magistrate, and therefore did not insist on the same perfection. It had respect to the condition of things as they existed at the time, and supposed the existence of some evils or wrongs which could not be eradicated without a miracle, and it only went so far as to provide against the worst effects of those evils or wrongs.

Sometimes the judicial law would come in conflict with a strict interpretation of the moral law; and this occurs even at the present day, as with a single illustration I can make appear. The moral law says, "thou shalt not steal,"—this means not only that it is wrong to rob a bank or purloin a ten-penny nail, but it means also that we shall in all things deal honestly with our fellows, and never take anything from our neighbor without rendering unto him a full equivalent therefor; yet under the sanction of the judicial law at the present day, a sheriff may collect fees from a party on whom he is serving a writ of *fiery facias*, without returning to that party any equivalent. Here the judicial law of our State comes in conflict with the moral law without sin, though a party receives injury thereby, because the conflict to all human apprehension is absolutely necessary. But, sir, whenever this conflict can be avoided it ought to be avoided, for not to do so is to be guilty of a violation of God's will, which all legislatures of christians profess to try to avoid.

At the time of the enactment of the law of Moses, slavery was almost universal in the world. It was an established institution everywhere, and if the wisdom of Almighty God deemed it better to regulate and abolish by a slow process this institution, rather than to abolish it at that time by the hand of violence, and at a single blow, does it follow of necessity that there is no evil in it, and that we ought not to abolish it? The necessity for the conflict between the moral and judicial law at that time is apparent, but as there is no such necessity at the present day that enjoins upon us the continuance of slavery; as any sort of slavery in the United States has long since been unnecessary for the happiness of the slave or indeed his master, I think I shall be able to show that it need not be continued, and that the further continuance of it is a moral evil, and for that reason, if for no other, it ought to be abolished.

Sir, I think our reason is at fault when we attempt to justify slavery, because in the laws of the Jews there was a provision for the regulation of it, for the control of it, for the removal of many of the evil consequences likely to grow out of it, and for the gradual abolition of it. A knowledge of the existence of such law ought rather to create in our minds an aversion to the institution and a desire for its earliest practicable abolition. And inasmuch as the necessity for its existence in any form has, with the progress of civilization, been done away with, it necessarily becomes a moral evil, and the further continuance of it a great social and political wrong.

Now, I propose very briefly, to notice the last of the three propositions put forth by the friends of slavery in justification of the continuance of that institution. The Saviour of